



POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES

NO. 808

PAGE

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DATE

June 9, 1994

TITLE

SAFE EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATION


DIRECTOR APPROVAL

[Signature]

PURPOSE

- 1.0 To provide Department of Fire and Rescue Services employees with general driving and safety regulations for operating emergency vehicles.
- 1.1 To reduce injuries and property damage by establishing standard procedures to avoid vehicle collisions.
- 1.2 To incorporate the general driving rules and regulations promulgated by the State of Maryland, DFRS, and Fire & Rescue Commission into a single policy.

APPLICABILITY

- 2.0 All DFRS employees in the Fire Protection Occupational Series.
- 2.1 DFRS employees qualified to drive emergency vehicles.
- 2.2  This policy was developed in cooperation with International Association of Firefighters Local 1664.

DEFINITIONS

- 3.0 Driver - Employee qualified to drive and/or operate emergency vehicles. May also be referred to as an operator.
- 3.1 Emergency Response Driving ("Responding") - Proceeding to an incident after dispatch by the ECC, or after notifying ECC, using audible and visual emergency warning devices.
- 3.2 Routine Driving - Proceeding through traffic, obeying all posted speed and traffic devices, without using audible and visual emergency warning devices. "Routine Driving" is the response mode for routine service calls.
- 3.3 Supervisor - The unit officer, station officer or other person responsible for overseeing employees.



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POLICY

- 4.0 The Department of Fire and Rescue Services will provide standardized rules and regulations to increase safety and reduce injuries and property damage while operating emergency vehicles.
- 4.1 Drivers and officers must not drive or knowingly permit a vehicle to be driven in an unsafe manner.
- 4.2 Apparatus must be operated in accordance with all traffic regulations when not responding to an emergency incident.
- 4.3 Drivers must operate vehicles in a courteous and professional manner at all times with regard for the best interest of the public and the fire and rescue service.
- 4.4 Personnel not confident in operating vehicles should request additional training or practice.
- 4.5 Drivers must not knowingly drive and/or operate a vehicle with mechanical defects that could affect the safety of its operation. Supervisors must be notified immediately when drivers determine a vehicle is unsafe to drive. Conflict between the driver and supervisor regarding the safety of the vehicle must be referred to the on-duty shift captain. The on-duty shift captain has the final determination and may order the driver to drive the vehicle.
- 4.6 All DFRS personnel must possess a valid motor vehicle operator's license of appropriate class to drive emergency vehicles.
- 4.7 Any employee whose license has been changed, revoked, suspended or otherwise disqualified must immediately notify his/her supervisor and refrain from operating motor vehicles.
- 4.8 Employees must notify their supervisor immediately of a conviction for any moving violation.



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- 4.9 Any employee who is suffering from a physical condition or taking medication that would adversely affect his/her ability to safely operate a motor vehicle must notify a supervisor immediately and refrain from driving. The Supervisor must evaluate the employee's fitness for duty and take action as needed. (See Policy #809, Substance Abuse Testing and Rehabilitation.)
- 4.10 Vehicle operators must exercise the principles of defensive driving at all times.
- 4.11 Provisions of this policy do not relieve vehicle drivers from exercising due caution for the safety of all persons.
- 4.12 Provisions of this policy do not protect drivers from the consequences of a reckless disregard for the safety of others.

RESPONSIBILITIES

5.0 DFRS drivers are responsible for:

- a. safe vehicle operation at all times;
- b. striving to eliminate their own driving errors and making allowances for the lack of skill or improper driving actions of other drivers;
- c. adjusting their own driving to compensate for unusual weather, road and traffic conditions, and to avoid being led into an accident by the unsafe actions of pedestrians or other drivers;
- d. being alert to accident-producing situations; recognizing the need for preventive action in advance; and taking the necessary precautions to prevent accidents by knowing when to slow down, stop, or yield the right of way to avoid involvement;
- e. complying with all procedures set forth in this policy;
- f. obeying all applicable traffic and motor vehicle laws of the State of Maryland; and



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g. operating their vehicle, and are accountable for their actions.

5.1 The unit officer is responsible for ensuring that the vehicle is operated in a safe manner and in accordance with all applicable laws, ordinances and regulations.

5.2 All supervisors are responsible to see that these procedures are followed and that personal safety is assured by proper training and supervision.

PROCEDURE

6.0 Drivers must reduce the speed of the vehicle at all intersections to negotiate a full stop when the intersection cannot be safely entered. The vehicle must be under complete control and driven at such a speed that it can be safely stopped to avoid an accident should another vehicle enter the intersection. Emergency vehicle drivers must anticipate the need to yield to any vehicle already in any part of the intersection when responding against the red light. Emergency vehicle drivers must realize that they may be required to yield the "right-of-way" to the other driver to avoid a collision.

6.1 Operators must strive to maintain a minimum safe following interval of at least three seconds between units at all times.

6.2 Operators must never drive at night at a speed greater than that which will permit the vehicle to come to a stop within the forward distance illuminated by the vehicle's headlights.

6.3 Pedestrians must always be given the right of way.

6.4 Vehicle operators must drive in a manner to accommodate the unpredictable of other drivers.

6.5 All DFRS drivers must be aware of clearances and vehicle height. Tight clearance situations must be avoided whenever possible. When tight clearance situations are encountered, the officer must dismount and guide the driver.



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6.6 To avoid contact with overhead doors, vehicle operators must never:

- a. move the vehicle into an overhead door opening when the door is still moving up or down;
- b. stop or park a vehicle in an overhead door opening;
- c. activate an overhead door when a vehicle is in the door opening; and
- d. activate an overhead door from any position which precludes full view of the vehicle and the door either by the activating party or an observer.

6.7 Vehicle operators must be aware of the height, weight and ground clearance limitations for their vehicles.

6.8 Vehicles may be parked in fire lanes or other unconventional spaces during emergency incidents or during fire prevention activities when other spaces are not available. Designated parking spaces must be used at all other times. Designated parking spaces should be vacated as soon as possible.

6.9 Emergency vehicles emerging from an alley, driveway or building must stop immediately prior to driving onto a sidewalk or roadway and must yield the right-of-way to pedestrians and other vehicles.

6.10 Drivers must back their vehicles safely. The unit officer must dismount to the rear of the apparatus to provide backing direction. The officer must be positioned at the rear of the apparatus on the driver's side and establish visual contact with the driver. If eye contact is lost between driver and officer, the driver must stop until eye contact is re-established. The officer may direct an additional person to assist and guide the driver from a second position. The use of operator's aids does not relieve the driver of responsibility for safe vehicle operation.



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- 6.11 If the driver is alone, he/she should obtain backing assistance. If no assistance is available, the driver must dismount and check around the entire vehicle to ensure that the vehicle can be backed in a safe manner ("circle check").
- 6.12 Ambulances and medic units backing up at hospitals must use backup personnel when possible. If backup personnel are not available, the driver must use extreme caution when backing the unit, following the instructions outlined in 6.11.
- 6.13 All vehicles except automobiles, command units, and brush trucks must follow the back-up procedures outlined in 6.10-6.12 unless backup personnel are available.
- 6.14 Standardized hand signals must be used by back-up personnel. See Attachment 8.0.
- 6.15 No emergency vehicle shall pass another emergency vehicle responding to an incident, unless advised to do so by the lead unit.
- 6.16 Emergency vehicle drivers must not pass a stopped school bus that is discharging or pickup up passengers, or has its warning lights displayed, unless cleared to do so via eye contact and/or other visual signal with the driver of the school bus.
- 6.17 During emergency response and non-emergency travel, vehicles must come to a complete stop at all unguarded railroad grade crossings. Drivers must assure that it is safe to proceed before crossing tracks. This same caution must be exercised when approaching and crossing guarded railroad crossings.
- 6.18 Under emergency response driving conditions, drivers must allow sufficient distance between units based on road conditions, traffic, etc. When following an emergency vehicle, drivers must be aware that motorists may pull into their paths after yielding the right-of-way to a leading emergency vehicle.
- 6.19 During emergency response driving, drivers may exceed the posted speed limits, proceed against traffic control devices and the indicated direction of travel:



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- a. when exercising extreme caution and ensuring that the safety of all persons and property are not endangered; and
 - b. when the weather and visibility provide an adequate field of view, especially at intersections.
- 6.20 Drivers must be aware of the running routes of units responding to an incident and be alert for other units that responding.
- 6.21 Drivers must be aware of areas that require special consideration, such as dips, hills, high traffic flow, and intersections. Consideration should be given to alternate routes of travel.
- 6.22 Drivers must slow down well in advance of approaching the scene of an incident. This allows for size up and evaluation of the unit's positioning.
- 6.23 Personnel are not permitted to get on or off moving apparatus. Drivers and unit officers must ensure that all personnel are seated and/or properly restrained before the apparatus begins to move. Personnel may not ride any back step on fire apparatus except as outlined in FRC Executive Regulation 26-03, "Safety While on Apparatus."
- 6.24 Headlights must be used during emergency response driving and whenever windshield wipers are in operation.
- 6.25 When a vehicle is driven using chains, traction bars or similar devices, the maximum speed must not exceed 35 mph.
- a. When a vehicle is in motion with chains on, the cab windows are to be open at least 3".
 - b. Personnel who notice that chains have broken must notify the driver immediately. When a vehicle is on the air and not responding to an incident and a chain breaks, the driver must pull to the side of the road and temporarily repair or remove the chain. In addition, flashers, emergency warning lights and traffic cones or flares must be used.



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c. When a chain breaks while a vehicle is responding to an incident, the vehicle must be stopped and ECC notified that the apparatus has broken a chain. The crew will attempt to repair the break, continue to the incident, and notify ECC of their continued response.

6.26 Wheel chocks, when provided, must be used whenever the apparatus is parked anywhere other than inside the station. Ambulances, medic units, utility vehicles, brush trucks and cars may use parking brakes rather than wheel chocks. On slopes and hills, the wheels of a parked vehicle must be turned toward the curb.

6.27 During the daily apparatus check, drivers must ensure that all tools, appliances, equipment, hose, blind caps, compartment doors, passenger doors and cargo are secured to prevent accidents, injuries, or loss while the unit is in motion.

6.28 Operators should perform tests of visual and audible emergency warning devices in a manner that avoids confusing passing traffic. (e.g. Test emergency warning lights with apparatus bay doors down, test audible emergency warning devices without warning lights on and sound devices as briefly as possible).

CANCELLATION

7.0 Policy #808, dated 12/04/91 is cancelled.

ATTACHMENT

8.0 Standardized hand signals

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STOP



Hold hands to the side, shoulder high, exposing palms to driver. At night, hold hands in the same manner, with the addition of a flashlight in one hand, shining at the driver. This will indicate an immediate STOP.

RIGHT OR LEFT

Point in the desired direction with one hand and motion in a circular "Come On" gesture with the other at chest level. At night, direct a flashlight beam at the hand pointing in the desired direction.



AHEAD OR BACK UP



Hold hands directly in front, chest high, fingers on hands directed toward one another, and motion in a circular "Come On" gesture. At night, hold a flashlight in one hand and direct the beam toward the other.



DIMINISHING CLEARANCE

Hold the hands to one side of the body indicating the approximate amount of distance the apparatus is from the obstacle. Close hands accordingly as the driver slowly maneuvers his apparatus toward same. Close hands as the distance narrows to a point where the signalman indicates immediate STOP. Always allow enough for driver's reaction time. At night, indicate in the same manner with a flashlight in the upper hand and beam directed at the palm of the other. On STOP, cover the flashlight beam with the hands.